

Kanegasaki Sister City Committee Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2002

Members: Ed Alford, Florence Boynton, Sarah Fajardo, Abbie Jenks, Alex Kent, Byron Koh (Chair), Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Earline Robinson, Joan Snowdon, Yuko Takahashi, Sara Woodbury

Resigned: Ruth Owen Jones

Liaisons:

Select Board Chair, Carl Seppala
Town Manager, Barry DelCastilho
Superintendent of Schools, Gus Sayer

Still in shock from the 9/11 terrorist attack, the Kanegasaki Sister City Committee (KSCC) held its regular first meeting of the fiscal year on September 12th, to begin planning for the November visit of the Goblin Dancers and Drummers from Japan to Amherst. Under the circumstances, it was not surprising to be informed, a few weeks later, that the trip would be postponed due to Kanegasaki's concerns about the flights. Mayor Takahashi of Kanegasaki sent a condolence letter to Amherst in response to the NYC disaster.

The KSCC turned its energies to a number of other upcoming exchanges and events still planned. Kanegasaki has developed a great interest in some of our traditions and local products as a result of our sister city relationship. For example, interest in Halloween was generated by LSSE's former Program Coordinator, Steve Ruhl, during his months in Kanegasaki as participant in a staff exchange between our two towns. As a result, this year, the Life Long Learning Center held a Halloween party, and a large box of candy was sent from Amherst for the children by KSCC member Joan Snowdon. Kanegasaki held its International Festival at the end of November and Select Board Chair Carl Seppala, and his wife, along with Jones Library Curator Tevis Kimball attended, representing Amherst. Local products, including Amherst tee shirts and pins, as well as maple syrup (very popular in Kanegasaki), were purchased and mailed by Yuko Takahashi and Byron Koh for this event, at Kanegasaki's expense. Our Amherst contingent was treated in high style and ceremony during this memorable trip.

The Freeman Foundation once again gave \$20,000 to Amherst to help support twelve of our 8th graders and their chaperone, who flew to Kanegasaki in March for the annual school exchange. Students from Japan will fly to Amherst at the end of July 2002 for the Teddy Bear Rally.

Rescheduled from November, Kanegasaki's eleven amazing Goblin Dancers and Drummers performed at the Taste of Amherst on the Town Common to a large and enthusiastic crowd. Mr. Seiko Sato, President of the Life Long Learning Center, accompanied the contingent. KSCC Chair Byron Koh and member Joan Snowdon took the group to several places of special interest to the Japanese, like the graves of William Smith Clark and Emily Dickinson, as well as Mount Sugarloaf and Wal-Mart. The entire KSCC hosted a very pleasant potluck for our visitors at the Bangs Community Center; this was attended also by several of our past and present exchange students and their families and Select Board Chair Carl Seppala. KSCC members Alex Kent and Yuko Takahashi translated; members Florence Boynton, Abbie Jenks, Ed Alford, Byron Koh, Joan Snowdon, and Nancy Pagano brought food and helped.

The KSCC is anticipating that FY 03 will be an exceptionally busy year, as we will be hosting a celebration of Amherst's ten-year sister city relationship with Kanegasaki, in addition to working on a number of other exchanges. Continuing challenges include raising money and seeking to increase committee membership.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Secretary